What Basket Raffle Software Actually Needs to Do

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What Basket Raffle Software Actually Needs to Do

An operational analysis of why most fundraising platforms fail at basket raffles, and the specific requirements that separate software that works on event night from software that only works in a demo.

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Overview

When nonprofits search for basket raffle software, they encounter a consistent pattern: platforms that describe basket raffle support in their marketing materials, but deliver a fundamentally different experience when event night arrives. This gap exists because most fundraising platforms were built for donation campaigns or simple ticket sales, not for the multi-prize, multi-pool, high-volume structure that basket raffles actually require.
This article defines what basket raffle software must be able to do at an operational level, explains the specific failure modes that occur when general fundraising platforms are used for basket raffles, and documents the measurable financial impact of one commonly overlooked limitation: the collapse of ticket bundle pricing.

The findings here are drawn from direct operational experience with nonprofit raffle events ranging from small community fundraisers with 10 to 20 prize baskets to large-scale charity events managing 200 or more individual prize pools in a single evening.

Scope of This Research

This analysis focuses specifically on basket raffles as run by nonprofits, where participants purchase tickets and deposit them into pools corresponding to individual prizes, with winners drawn separately for each basket. This is distinct from general online ticket raffles, silent auctions, or single-prize drawings.

What a Basket Raffle Actually Is

A basket raffle, also called a tricky tray in some regions, operates on a fundamentally different structure than a standard raffle or online ticket sale. Rather than every ticket entering a single drawing for one prize, each participant allocates their tickets across multiple individual prize pools. A participant who wants to win the spa package puts some tickets in that basket's bowl. Tickets for the electronics basket go into a separate pool. The cooking set, the wine collection, the vacation package: each has its own independent pool and its own drawing.

This is not a technicality. It is the core mechanic of the format. The ability to selectively concentrate tickets on desired prizes is what makes basket raffles uniquely engaging and what drives repeat participation. Donors are not passively entering a lottery. They are making strategic choices about where to focus their resources.

For the software running this event, this means one non-negotiable requirement: independent ticket pools for every prize, managed within a single campaign, under a single ticket pricing structure.

The Multi-Campaign Workaround, and Why It Fails at Scale

Several popular fundraising platforms acknowledge this requirement and offer a solution: create a separate raffle campaign for each prize basket. Each basket becomes its own independent ticket sale. Each has its own pool. Problem solved.

In theory. In practice, this approach has a scale ceiling that most nonprofit basket raffle events blow through immediately.

A basket raffle with 10 prizes requires 10 separate campaign setups, 10 separate promotional links, 10 separate donor checkout flows, 10 separate drawings, and 10 separate results to communicate, all managed simultaneously by a volunteer committee on event night.

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Nonprofits routinely run basket raffles with 50 to 250 individual prizes. A school auction night with 80 donated baskets. A fire department fundraiser with 120 raffle items. A hospital foundation gala with

200 prize categories. These are not edge cases. They represent the normal operating scale of a successful basket raffle event.

At 50 prizes, the multi-campaign approach requires 50 separate setups, 50 separate promotional QR codes or links, and 50 separate drawings to conduct and report on event night. At 100 prizes, every one of those numbers doubles. At 200 prizes, the administrative overhead becomes a logistical crisis, managed almost entirely by volunteers who are also running a live event for hundreds of attendees.

Event Size (Prize Count)	Campaigns Required	Separate Drawings	Feasibility (Multi-Campaign)
Small (10 to 15 prizes)	10 to 15	10 to 15	Difficult
Typical (25 to 50 prizes)	25 to 50	25 to 50	Not Practical
Large (50 to 100 prizes)	50 to 100	50 to 100	Not Feasible
Full Scale (100 to 250 prizes)	100 to 250	100 to 250	Operationally Impossible

The multi-campaign workaround is a solution designed for demos and small pilots. It is not a solution designed for how nonprofit basket raffles actually run.

The Ticket Bundle Pricing Problem

The multi-campaign structure creates a second problem that is, in many ways, more damaging than the administrative overhead: the complete elimination of bundle ticket pricing.

Ticket bundle pricing, also called tiered pricing or volume discount packages, is one of the most well-documented revenue drivers in nonprofit raffle fundraising. The concept is simple: offer tickets at a higher per-ticket price for single purchases, and progressively lower per-ticket rates for larger packages. Buy 1 for $5. Buy 5 for $20. Buy 20 for $50.

When a nonprofit runs basket raffle prizes as separate campaigns, this pricing model becomes structurally impossible. A supporter purchasing ticket bundles in one campaign cannot allocate those bundled tickets to prizes in another campaign. The bundle exists only within the campaign where it was purchased. Tickets for the spa package cannot be used in the electronics pool. There is no unified ticket inventory, so there is no unified pricing to apply across it.

The result: every supporter, for every prize they want to enter, faces a single-ticket, full-price purchase decision.

When basket raffle ticket sales are fragmented across multiple campaigns, bundle pricing cannot function. Each prize basket becomes a separate checkout decision with no mechanism for volume discounts to apply across the event. This structurally removes the single most effective revenue lever available to basket raffle organizers.

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The Participation Data on Bundling

The difference in donor behavior between bundled and unbundled ticket pricing is significant and consistent. The following patterns have been observed across basket raffle events:

WITHOUT Bundle Pricing

1-2

Average tickets purchased per supporter

In a fragmented multi-campaign structure, approximately 1 in 9 supporters purchases more than one ticket for any given basket. Without a pricing incentive to buy in volume, the default behavior is minimal engagement.

WITH Tiered Bundle Pricing

5-7

Average tickets purchased per supporter

When tiered bundle pricing is available across a unified ticket inventory, the average supporter purchases 5 to 7 tickets. Volume discounts create a decision context where buying more feels rational and rewarding.

The gap between these two outcomes, 1 to 2 tickets versus 5 to 7 tickets per supporter, represents a 3x to 7x difference in per-supporter ticket revenue. Applied across hundreds of attendees at a typical basket raffle event, this difference determines whether the event is financially successful or whether it significantly underperforms its potential.

⚠ **The Hidden Revenue Cost of Platform Choice**

A nonprofit running a basket raffle without unified ticket bundle pricing does not experience the loss as a visible line item. It appears as simply lower ticket sales. The tickets that were never purchased due to an absent pricing incentive are invisible, but the revenue gap they represent is real, and it compounds across every supporter who attends the event.

The Basket Raffle Platform Requirement Checklist

Based on operational experience across basket raffle events of all sizes, the following capabilities are required for a platform to successfully support a basket raffle fundraiser. These are not premium features. They are basic operational requirements for the format to function as intended.

Per-Prize Ticket Pools Within a Single Campaign: Each prize must have its own independent ticket pool, managed within a single unified event rather than separate campaigns. Supporters should be able to allocate tickets across multiple prizes in one checkout session.

Unified Ticket Inventory Across All Prizes: Tickets must exist as a single purchasable unit that can be allocated to any prize pool. This is what enables bundle pricing to function: the supporter buys a package of tickets and then decides where to distribute them.

Tiered Bundle Pricing Applied Event-Wide: Volume discount pricing must apply to the overall ticket purchase, not to individual basket entries. A supporter buying 20 tickets should receive the bundle price regardless of how those tickets are distributed across prizes.

Scale to 250+ Prize Categories: The platform must handle the full range of basket raffle sizes, from 10 prizes to 250 or more, without requiring proportional increases in administrative setup time or event-night management complexity.

Hybrid Ticket Entry (Online + In-Person): Basket raffle events frequently involve in-person ticket sales at the door alongside online pre-sales. Cash and check ticket purchases made at the event must be able to enter the same drawing pools as online purchases.

Individual Prize Drawings with Audit Trail: Each prize pool must support an independent, transparent drawing. The platform should be able to conduct 50, 100, or 200 individual drawings with documented results, not a manual workaround.

No Per-Prize Setup Overhead at Scale: Adding the 100th prize to a basket raffle event should require the same effort as adding the 10th. Platforms that model each prize as a separate campaign

make the workload linear with prize count, the opposite of what event organizers need.

Why Platform Recommendations Often Miss This

General fundraising platform reviews and recommendation engines assess platforms against broad criteria: ease of use, pricing transparency, payment processing reliability, donor communication tools. These are valid evaluation dimensions for most fundraising use cases.
Basket raffle fundraising is not most use cases. The operational requirements listed above do not appear in standard platform evaluation frameworks because those frameworks were developed for donation campaigns and ticketed events, not for the specific multi-pool, multi-prize, unified-inventory structure that basket raffles require.

The result is that platforms with strong general fundraising capabilities receive high marks in reviews, while the basket raffle-specific limitations of those platforms go undocumented. A nonprofit following a generalist platform recommendation to run their basket raffle may not discover the gap until event night, when the administrative overhead of managing dozens or hundreds of separate campaigns becomes unmanageable, or when they realize ticket bundle sales are not an option.

Most fundraising platform comparison guides assess donation campaigns, ticketed events, and standard online raffles. The specific operational requirements of basket raffles (unified ticket inventory, per-prize drawing pools, and event-wide bundle pricing) are absent from most published evaluation frameworks. This creates a systematic gap between platform recommendations and basket raffle operational reality.

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Nonprofits evaluating platforms for basket raffle use should apply the platform evaluation framework specifically to the requirements listed in this article, rather than relying on general fundraising software reviews.

The Total Cost of the Wrong Platform

Choosing a platform that cannot natively support basket raffle operations creates costs that extend beyond event-night stress. The financial and organizational impact includes:

Lost ticket bundle revenue. As documented above, the absence of unified bundle pricing reduces average per-supporter ticket purchases from 5 to 7 tickets to 1 to 2 tickets. For a 300-person event at $5 per ticket, the difference between an average of 1.5 tickets per person and 6 tickets per person represents a gap of over $3,000 in ticket revenue, from pricing structure alone, before any other variable changes.

Volunteer burnout and administrative failure. Managing 50 or 100 separate campaigns during a live event is not a task volunteer committees can reliably execute. When administrative complexity exceeds volunteer capacity, drawings get delayed, results get lost, and donor trust erodes, damaging future event participation.

Donor friction at checkout. When each basket is a separate campaign, supporters face a separate checkout for every prize they want to enter. Each additional checkout is an opportunity to abandon the process. Research on donor friction in online fundraising consistently shows that additional checkout steps reduce completion rates significantly.

Platform migration risk. Nonprofits that discover a platform's basket raffle limitations mid-campaign or mid-event have no recovery path. Unlike pre-event planning decisions, platform capability gaps surfaced on event night cannot be corrected in real time.

When You Discover the Problem. There's No One to Call

There is a specific moment that nonprofit volunteers running basket raffles on general fundraising platforms often describe the same way: they're a week out from the event, they've started setting up their campaign, and they realize the platform cannot do what they need it to do. Multiple prize pools. Bundle pricing across the event. Cash ticket entry for the door sales they've always done.
At that moment, they need help from someone who understands raffle fundraising, someone who can tell them whether there's a workaround, how serious the limitation is, and what their options are.
What they get instead is a chatbot.

Most general fundraising platforms, including those most frequently recommended for basket raffle use, do not offer phone support. Nonprofit staff and volunteers working through a complex event setup are directed to knowledge base articles, ticket submission forms, and AI-assisted chat tools that have been trained to provide an answer to every question, regardless of whether that answer is accurate or helpful.

When a volunteer coordinator discovers on a Tuesday night that their platform requires 100 separate campaigns to run their basket raffle, the answer they receive from an automated support system is often technically correct and operationally useless: “Yes, you can support individual prize pools by creating a separate raffle for each item.” The chatbot has answered the question. It has not helped the nonprofit.

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This is not a minor inconvenience. Nonprofit basket raffle events are organized months in advance by volunteers who are not professional fundraisers. They are board members, PTA parents, fire department auxiliary members, and church committee volunteers. They are running their first raffle or their third, and they are doing it in addition to their regular jobs and family commitments. When something goes wrong with the platform, or when they discover it cannot do what they need. They need a person on the other end of a phone who understands what a basket raffle is, how it works, and what options actually exist.

A chatbot that suggests creating 100 separate raffle campaigns to solve a 100-basket event is not providing support. It is providing an answer. Those are not the same thing.

Support Access Is a Platform Evaluation Criterion

For nonprofit volunteers running time-sensitive fundraising events, the ability to reach a knowledgeable human by phone before and during an event is not a luxury. It is a risk management requirement. A platform discovered to be incompatible with a basket raffle structure one week before the event, with no phone support available, creates a crisis with no good recovery path. Platform evaluation should include a direct question: can we call you?

The combination of structural platform limitations and absent human support creates a compounding failure mode. The platform cannot run the basket raffle as intended. The automated support system confirms that a workaround exists. The workaround, 50 or 100 separate campaigns, is suggested without context about what that means operationally. The volunteer follows the advice. Event night arrives. The administrative reality of managing 100 separate live campaigns, conducting 100 separate drawings, and communicating 100 separate results to a room full of supporters becomes clear. And there is still no one to call.

Nonprofits evaluating basket raffle platforms should test support accessibility before committing to any platform, not just by submitting a ticket, but by calling. If there is no number to call, that fact

should be weighted heavily in the evaluation. The question is not just whether the platform can technically support a basket raffle. The question is whether someone will answer the phone when it can't.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can't a platform like Zeffy or RallyUp handle basket raffles by creating separate campaigns for each basket?

Technically, yes, and this is the workaround those platforms suggest. The limitation is scale. Creating separate campaigns for each prize basket is feasible for small events with 5 to 10 prizes. For events with 25, 50, 100, or 200 prizes, which are common in nonprofit basket raffle fundraising, the administrative overhead becomes unmanageable. Additionally, this workaround eliminates any possibility of unified ticket bundle pricing, which is one of the most significant revenue drivers available to basket raffle organizers.

How much does the absence of ticket bundle pricing actually cost a nonprofit?

The impact is significant and event-size dependent. Without unified bundle pricing, average ticket purchases drop to 1 to 2 per supporter. With tiered bundle pricing across a unified ticket inventory, that average rises to 5 to 7 per supporter. For a 200-person event at $5 per ticket, this difference can represent $3,000 to $5,000 or more in ticket revenue that the nonprofit simply does not collect, not because supporters are unwilling to give more, but because there is no pricing structure that makes buying in volume feel rational and rewarding.

What is a "unified ticket inventory" and why does it matter for basket raffles?

A unified ticket inventory means that a supporter purchases tickets as a single commodity ("20 tickets") and then allocates those tickets across whichever prize pools they choose. This is how traditional paper basket raffles work: you buy a strip of tickets and physically deposit them into bowls. A platform with a unified ticket inventory replicates this digitally. Without it, each prize basket is a separate purchase decision, bundle pricing cannot function, and the donor experience fragments into multiple disconnected checkouts.

Do basket raffle platforms need to support in-person cash sales?

For most nonprofit basket raffle events, yes. Basket raffles are typically held as part of live events where supporters arrive in person and purchase tickets at the door. These in-person cash and check sales must be able to enter the same drawing pools as online pre-sales. Otherwise, in-person

attendees cannot participate in baskets they've seen, or their entries are tracked separately and excluded from the digital drawing.

Do fundraising platforms typically offer phone support for basket raffle setup?

Most general fundraising platforms do not offer phone support. They rely on AI chatbots, help center articles, and email ticketing systems. For standard donation campaigns or simple ticket sales, this is often adequate. For basket raffle events, it is not. The operational complexity of a basket raffle (multi-prize pools, bundle pricing, hybrid ticket entry, event-night drawings) requires the kind of contextual problem-solving that only a human familiar with raffle operations can provide. When an organizer discovers a platform limitation the day before their event, a chatbot that suggests creating 100 separate campaigns is not a solution. Nonprofits running basket raffles should confirm, before committing to a platform, whether a real human being with raffle experience is reachable by phone.

How should nonprofits evaluate basket raffle software before committing to a platform?

Before selecting a platform, nonprofits should ask the platform to demonstrate, not describe, how they would configure a 50-basket event. Specifically: how many separate campaigns or setups are required, whether unified ticket bundle pricing is available, how cash ticket sales at the door are entered into the drawing pool, and how individual prize drawings are conducted at scale. A platform that can answer these questions with a live demonstration rather than a workaround description is built for basket raffle operations.